

# Third Fork Creek Restoration Update

**T**he Third Fork Creek Watershed Restoration planning project is now underway by the City of Durham Engineering and Stormwater Services Division, with consulting support from Tetra Tech.

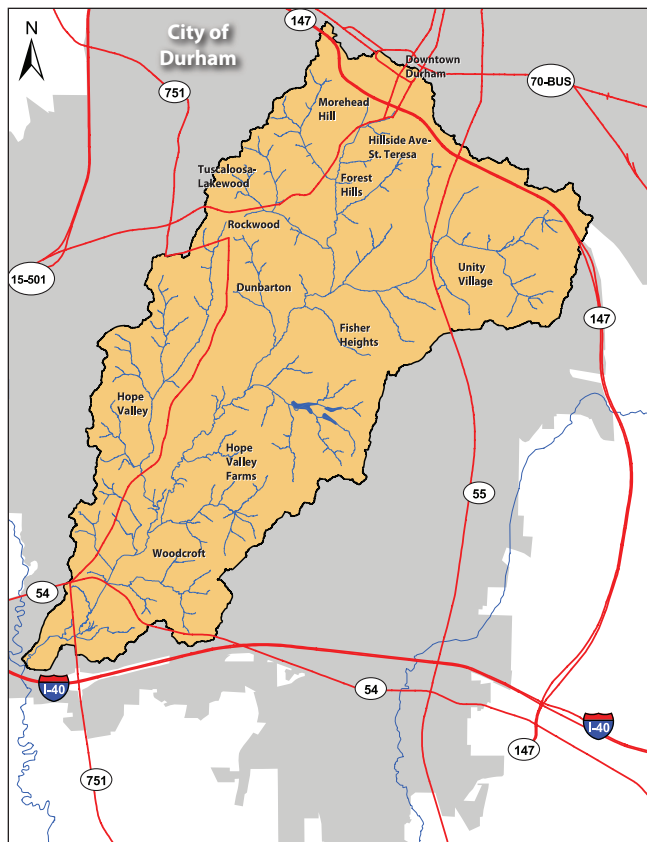
**Where is the Third Fork Creek watershed?** Third Fork Creek flows from downtown through the heart of many Durham neighborhoods, like Tuscaloosa-Lakewood, St. Teresa, Forest Hills, Hope Valley Farms, and Woodcroft, down to New Hope Creek, which is a tributary of Jordan Lake.

**Why are we taking a watershed—not just a stream—perspective?** A watershed approach allows us to look at all land draining to Third Fork Creek and its tributaries, and to understand better the connection between what's happening on the land and the water quality in the creek. In particular, we're interested in how pollution from stormwater runoff from residential and business areas can be better managed to improve water quality.

## What are the biggest water quality concerns?

The NC Division of Water Quality (DWQ) has determined that Third Fork Creek is not meeting water quality standards due to high turbidity (muddy water), low dissolved oxygen, and poor biological conditions. DWQ also has found that pollution from Third Fork Creek is contributing to the impairment of Jordan Lake downstream of the watershed. Urban and suburban areas in the watershed contribute trash, oil, grease, lawn chemicals, nutrients, and high flows during storm events that erode stream banks and send sediment churning downstream. Leaking or overflowing sewer pipes and malfunctioning septic systems also add bacteria and nutrients to the stream.

**How will the Watershed Restoration Plan help?** The project team is working to craft a restoration plan that achieves several important goals for the City. The plan will set priorities for constructing management projects, including stormwater retrofits (devices that control stormwater quantity and quality in existing developments) and stream channel and riparian buffer restoration projects. Such projects help to restore and protect water quality and ecology not just in the Third Fork Creek watershed but in Jordan Lake as well. In addition, such projects help to protect human health, safety, and property from flooding, erosion or other impacts. The plan will identify the most cost-effective measures to meet state requirements and address citizen and business



**Third Fork Creek Watershed**



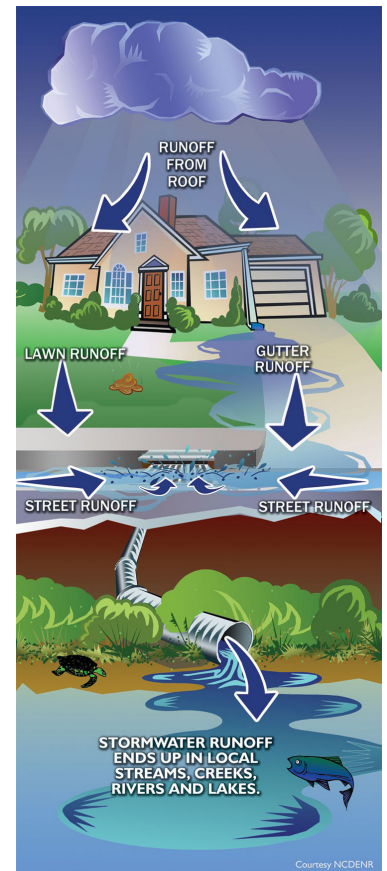
**The headwaters of Third Fork Creek drain mostly urban and residential land.**



owner concerns. One desired outcome of this project is the creation of a partnership between the City and an engaged public that will implement the plan to improve the quality of life and environment for the community.

**What is the current status of the project?** The project team and interested citizens have walked the Third Fork Creek watershed, observing and noting conditions, including problem areas and their causes. The team has identified good candidate sites for stream restoration, bank stabilization, and preservation of riparian areas along streams. The Team has been screening existing developed areas in the watershed for potential construction of stormwater best management practices (BMPs) that could reduce the existing impacts from stormwater pollutant loading and runoff volume. In the coming months, the Team will complete its assessment and finalize recommendations for stream restoration projects, stormwater BMP retrofits, and other protection efforts, such as the provision of conservation easements. Recommendations will be made for implementation of enhanced stewardship practices during new development and re-development projects. Work is scheduled to be completed during early 2012 with the provision of a draft of the Third Fork Creek Watershed Management Plan and Implementation Strategy. This draft document will be the subject of the next project update.

**What Can You Do?** Stay informed, provide feedback, and learn how you can do your part to protect water quality where you live and work in the watershed. Reports and draft recommendations from the project will be posted on the Stormwater Program's website. Check in at [www.durhamnc.gov/departments/works/stormwater](http://www.durhamnc.gov/departments/works/stormwater) and click on Third Fork Creek Watershed Improvement Project to stay up-to-date. If you have questions or comments about the watershed reports or ongoing efforts, you can contact Dave Brown, the City's project manager, by e-mail at [david.brown@durhamnc.gov](mailto:david.brown@durhamnc.gov) or by phone at (919) 560-4326, ext. 30241. We will also be looking for your input on the draft Plan and Implementation Strategy. A public meeting to discuss this project is being planned for the month of November. The next project update will focus some on what homeowners and businesses can do individually to help improve the watershed. So stay tuned!



**Stormwater runs off of our buildings, driveways, parking lots and streets carrying pollution and potentially causing flooding and erosion problems.**



**(left) Excessive stormwater runoff has resulted in severe streambank erosion and sedimentation of the stream channel impacting water quality.**



**(above) Portions of Third Fork Creek are surrounded by forest that provides water quality protection.**

**(right) Project team members surveying Third Fork Creek channel characteristics as it flows through Forest Hills Park.**

